NATO's Next Strategic Concept

How the Alliance's New Strategy will Reshape Global Security

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CAPPING MONTHS of diplomatic signaling—and to no one's eventual surprise—the declaration capping the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's most recent summit at Strasbourg and Kehl confirmed what members have been saying for some time: "The organization needs a new strategy."[1] The last one, signed over a decade ago, followed on the heels of the NATO intervention in Kosovo and Bosnia. Since then the United States has endured a traumatic terrorist attack and become bogged down in Afghanistan and Iraq with a handful of increasingly reluctant NATO partners. Born as a bulwark against the Soviet Union in 1949, the alliance survived the fall of communism by expanding its portfolio from the mere static defense of each other's borders to enhancing regional stability through engagement and enlargement. Now NATO is facing a new reality, and the call for a new strategic concept goes to the heart of its relevancy.

While NATO has grown from a cozy club of 16 nations to a community of 28—welcoming Albania and Croatia into the fold at Strasbourg and Kehl—it is precisely this growth that some perceive as crippling its ability to gain the consensus necessary for decisive action. Declining demographics and the current economic crisis are leading Europeans to prioritize social spending over defense expenditures. Few nations spend anywhere near NATO's informally agreed upon 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) on defense. While yesterday's flagship operation was peacekeeping in the nearby Balkans, today's challenge is nation building in far-flung Afghanistan. In part as a distraction from its domestic woes—and further complicating the matter—a newly resurgent Russia is increasingly antagonistic towards the Euro-Atlantic partnership. This has created a rift

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between newer NATO affiliates who favor the traditional focus on territorial defense over their long-tenured colleagues' preferences toward preparing for newer, more salient challenges.

All this has led, once again, to calls for the alliance to reinvent itself through a refreshed strategic concept, and in its discernment the alliance will rely upon the collective wisdom of the "group of experts" led by former US ambassador Madeleine K. Albright.[2] NATO will only continue to be relevant if the United States views its European partners as capable of assisting with the global security workload and if Europe views the United States as a guarantor of European stability and prosperity. Recent events have demonstrated the limits of European aspirations—which remain regionally focused. Their lack of global ambitions, nevertheless, should not dissuade the United States from seeing its European partners as integral to American security. Leveraging NATO's capabilities will provide America a strategic buffer and democratic bulwark against emerging threats. Getting NATO's next strategy right, therefore, has important implications for American and European security.

Strategic Conceptualization within NATO

Since the alliance's beginning, strategic concepts have focused almost exclusively on providing the idea, or notion, of how national militaries would align themselves to achieve tangible operational objectives that translate into political gains. The linage of strategic concepts has its roots in "The Strategic Concept for the Defense of the North Atlantic Area" (DC 6/1), dated 6 January 1950 and drafted by the now-defunct North Atlantic Defense Committee (composed of each nation's minister of defense).[3] While other strategic concepts date from the founding of the alliance, this was the first document to receive ministerial sanction. This classified document, like all subsequent strategic concepts until the end of the Cold War, reflected a purely defensive posture within national borders by military contributions "in proportion" to national means.[4] Mutual aid and self-help were the cornerstones of this notional strategic arrangement.

While describing the alliance's strategy in broad terms, DC 6/1 nonetheless articulated the need to extend territorial defense as far to the east as possible—a clear nod to the unspecified Soviet threat—and delineated specific roles and responsibilities to those best suited. For example, the United States understandably assumed responsibility for providing the

nuclear shield. At its core, however, DC 6/1 stressed the importance of economic stability and recovery by laying out an economy-of-force approach that assumed a warning sufficient for mass mobilization. This latter assumption had the added benefit of reducing the obligation to maintain a large standing force. The formation of an integrated NATO military structure under the centralized command of GEN Dwight D. Eisenhower led to the next strategic concept.

Drafted by the newly empowered Military Committee and approved in December 1952, MC 3/5 in essence maintained continuity with DC 6/1. While articulating broad principles, these early strategic concepts were short on the detail needed for adequate planning. This necessitated drafting detailed strategic guidance, which set about nesting a subregional approach to defense within a phased concept of operations.[5] Upon assuming the American presidency, Eisenhower surveyed the strategic landscape and shifted the US military posture—and by extension NATO's—away from expensive conventional forces toward a less-costly nuclear umbrella.[6] The alliance's first top commander was well aware of the fiscal and political inability of the Europeans to generate adequate military force—a theme that continues to resonate today. Eisenhower was fearful that a large conventional force would bleed the United States to the point of exhaustion and collapse.[7] Conventional forces would remain, however, as forces-in-being to address "alternate threats" posed by the Soviets.[8]

This led to the May 1957 iteration of NATO's strategic concept, which sought to deter an attack on Western Europe by threatening a massive nuclear retaliation—to include first-use of nuclear weapons. Representing an extension of the American new-look policy, MC 14/2 repudiated the concept of limited war. If deterrence failed, the assumption was that the initial violent nuclear spasm would result in the exhaustion necessary for a strategic pause of sufficient duration to allow the United States to mobilize. MC 14/2, nevertheless, provided more-comprehensive direction than its predecessor by including a strategic assessment of European regions under its protective umbrella. Incorporating a detailed analysis of strategic factors and objectives eliminated the need for subordinate strategic guidance that traditionally followed previous concepts.[9]

The Berlin standoff, the Cuban missile crisis, and military involvement in Indochina resulted in a strategic reassessment that led the Kennedy administration to adopt a policy of flexible response. The Americans recognized that a greater range of Soviet options at the lower end of the

conflict spectrum required a credible response by a wider assortment of alternatives.[10] The French withdrawal from NATO's integrated military structure made possible the adoption of the alliance's next strategic concept in January 1968.[11] MC 14/3 opened the door to limited war through the balancing of nuclear and conventional forces while maintaining a forward defensive posture in Western Europe.[12] The intent was to deter Soviet provocations by seeding the Kremlin with uncertainty over NATO's response. MC 14/3 called for the formation of a high-readiness, forward-deployed force that could provide a shield sufficient to allow consultation on escalatory responses in case of an attack.[13] This strategic concept would take the alliance through the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

As Soviet forces receded from Eastern Europe, the breakup of the Warsaw Pact dramatically altered the security environment. The near elimination of a direct military threat to European sovereignty ushered in a period of deep reflection within the alliance that resulted in the New Strategic Concept (NSC) in 1991. The NSC shifted the focus to crisis response and conflict prevention through dialog and cooperation, calling upon members to increase their use of nonmilitary power to address collective security concerns.[14] The NSC hedged against the return of conventional military threats, albeit at a much-reduced force posture. The approach outlined in the NSC, for example, called for cuts to—but not the elimination of—forward-stationed forces, nuclear weapons, and military readiness. Arms control and disarmament were key to mitigating the risk of armed confrontation under the NSC as the alliance expanded its posture of tiered readiness. There was also the glimmer of hope that the Europeans would shoulder a greater share of the security and defense burden, although at a greatly reduced level, in anticipation of a peace dividend.

Absent the global restraints imposed by Soviet-American antagonism, however, political and social instability manifested itself in Europe. To counter the resulting insecurity, NATO began acting outside its traditional boundaries in the mid 1990s to thwart threats at their source.[15] The poor performance of European forces on the ground in Kosovo and the Balkans—leading to the eventual intervention by the United States under the auspices of NATO—revealed European military shortcomings. This recognition—coupled with the rise of regional organizations like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union, along with a European desire to free itself from military dependence

on the United States as witnessed by the call for a separate and distinct European Security and Defense Identity—led to a rethinking of NATO's role yet again.

Signed in 1999, NATO's current strategic concept (SC-99) retained a conventional focus but acknowledged the continual spread of unconventional challenges—such as mass migration and organized crime—and the need to keep these threats at a distance. Recognizing that insecurity and instability outside their collective borders could spread and destabilize all European nations, SC-99 focused more intently on "non–Article 5" activities like conflict prevention and crisis management. The aim was to enhance security and stability by dealing proactively with potential crises.[16] SC-99 acknowledged the requirement for operations beyond the allies' territories, outlining, for example, the necessity of a combined joint task force (CJTF) to project force "out of area." Strategic nuclear forces remained the "supreme guarantee of security"; however, SC-99 all but phased out substrategic nuclear forces while retaining its predecessor's focus on threat reduction through arms control and disarmament.

More importantly, SC-99 institutionalized the ongoing formation of cooperative partnerships through multinational dialogue. This occurred on two planes. The first was outside the Euro-Atlantic area, where the alliance created forums for cooperation with states in North Africa (through the Mediterranean Dialog) and in the Middle East (under the auspices of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative). These venues offered NATO the opportunity to collaborate on regional security issues outside the alliance's traditional purview. The second was closer to home, where the alliance bet that the enticement to join NATO would provide the leverage necessary to nurture the emergence of liberal democracies. While this was not always the case, it nonetheless unilaterally extended a standard membership roadmap to European states before subsequently modifying its Partnership-for-Peace program to accommodate differing social and political proclivities.

Surveying the post–9/11 geopolitical landscape, the United States responded by significantly adjusting its global military posture. While the United States continued to view NATO as an important mechanism for Euro-Atlantic security and cooperation, meeting new threats required an adjustment in US military commitment to Europe. America shifted away for an ensconced heavy force designed for massive armor engagements toward a rotational forward-based force capable of rapid deployment and

early entry into conflicts beyond Europe. It, in essence, slated Europe to become a secure base for US operations in central and southwest Asia and Africa.[17] Europe's excellent training facilities and centrally located logistics infrastructure could contribute significantly to maintaining America's global freedom of action. In exchange, the Europeans retained a committed partner willing to support their individual and collective military needs.[18]

Surveying the New Strategic Landscape

Following the signing of SC-99, the alliance experienced three consecutive waves of expansion that first brought the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland into the fold in November 2002. Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined at the conclusion of the Prague Summit in March 2004, followed by the aforementioned Albania and Croatia at the most recent summit. For an alliance built on achieving consensus, the addition of each new member increases the risk of paralysis. It is now a near certainty that NATO's open-door policy will close in the face of Ukraine and Georgia—the former due to Russian-instigated political indecision and the latter because of a border dispute with Russia. Regardless of official proclamations to the contrary, NATO has lost its nerve in the face of Russian bellicosity.[19]

The fall of the wall left Russia dazed, confused, and dispirited. The quick absorption of ex-Soviet republics and former communist states into NATO during this period now engenders Russian hostility. With their brief flirtations with democracy and market economics now behind them, the Russians have emerged as a continental power willing to exert hard power to stake a historic claim on their near abroad. Russia is now firmly opposed to NATO expansion into the former Soviet Socialist Republics and seems willing to not only use military force (as in the case of Georgia) but also economic leverage (for example, cutting off gas supplies to Europe as it did a year ago January) to weaken NATO solidarity. Russia's transformation from a capital-based command economy to a natural resource–based oligarchy insures the endowment necessary to finance its ambitions. At the same time, the US relationship with Russia has grown increasingly complex. While simultaneously seeking their cooperation in curtailing Iran's nuclear ambitions and maintaining open lines of communication

regarding Afghanistan, US plans for a European antimissile system antagonized the Russians.

The strategic environment that gave rise to SC-99 stands in stark contrast to the one the alliance now inhabits. In an attempt to provide the group of experts with the perspectives of senior NATO military leaders on this new environment, Allied Command Transformation (ACT) commissioned the Multiple Futures Project (MFP).[20] Its role is similar to that of the US *Joint Operating Environment* (*JOE*) signed out by Joint Forces Command. Both seek to provide a contextual backdrop for defense planning—not only identifying key strategic drivers and risks but also postulating alternate futures to visualize shifts in the strategic landscape. While the depth of analysis presented in the *JOE* outpaces that of the MFP, the latter integrates and presents the implications in a manner that provides greater insight into current and future strategic dilemmas. These documents display considerable alignment in the dangers they identify, and to the extent they differ, it is in the emphases of specific attributes of the emerging international environment. Shifting perspectives, moreover, have brought converging transatlantic views on emerging security challenges.[21] The group of experts grasps the emerging perils but, nonetheless, councils caution in straying from NATO's conventional legacy—choosing to limit the allies' focus on unconventional threats like terrorism, cyber, and ballistic missile attack (of which the latter is arguably conventional).[22] While the concentration on a bounded set of threats provides strategic focus, there is a danger that in doing so the alliance may expose itself to strategic surprise from unexpected quarters.

Super-empowered individuals now wield asymmetric conventional weapons of hitherto unseen lethality. Melting polar ice caps are exposing new sea lanes and rich natural resources on NATO's northern flank that have polar powers (Russia, Canada, Norway, Denmark, and the United States) jockeying for position. Traditionally representing the alliance's soft underbelly, the Mediterranean waters provide a bulwark against southern threats. Water scarcity, famine, powerful nonstate actors, endemic local conflicts, and globalization all combine to create an impetus for uncontrolled migrations that threaten European stability. Increasing desertification has drawn NATO into the Darfur region where scarce resources led to a nomadic-agrarian clash. The eastern approaches, anchored by Turkey and Greece, present a changing geopolitical landscape with the potential to harbor nontraditional threats ranging from transnational criminal gangs

to rampant extremism and nuclear-tipped missiles. In addition to regional conflicts, cyber threats—like the denial-of-service attack on Estonia—are increasingly threatening alliance economic security. Energy security, both human and mechanical, is leading NATO to lend a hand in the multinational effort to suppress piracy. Although the geographic sandwiching of the Atlantic between its two North American members and the remaining 26 would appear to ensure a secure western flank, perils from humanitarian disasters, infectious diseases, dwindling fisheries, and terrorism are closing in from all cardinal points.

In the face of an aging population in need of social services and a continental economy in disarray, NATO's European partners increasingly focus inward. Disengagement is evident in their inability or unwillingness to invest sufficiently in defense. While Bulgaria, France, Turkey, Greece, and the UK exceed the defense spending target, Europe overall manages to spend only 1.7 percent of GDP on defense—with half going to personnel expenditures—while the United States devotes 4 percent of its GDP to defense, of which roughly 30 percent covers personnel costs.[23] Deaths now outpace births at an accelerating rate in Western Europe, and the percentage of the population over 65 will grow from just under 18 percent today to over 28 percent by 2050.[24] Shrinking and aging populations will result in fewer resources available for defense as well as an increasing aversion to placing precious lives at risk.

Within NATO there exist considerable differences in national military capabilities, ranging from ponderous conscripted legacy forces incapable of deployment outside national borders to highly lethal and globally employable militaries. Former Warsaw Pact members that have recently joined NATO—as well as future aspirants—retain Soviet hardware, systems, and doctrine. In most cases, however, the orientation of NATO forces—including the United States—remains on symmetrical force-on-force engagements with similarly arrayed adversaries. Furthermore, European nations, in shifting from military conscription to voluntary recruitment, have created smaller militaries—but of increased professionalism. Even so, given European demographics, they will face increased recruitment challenges and retention costs. Paradoxically, widening capabilities disparities cut two ways, either threatening a dysfunctional response to "high end" conventional threats that could doom the alliance's relevance or facilitating a "low end" approach suboptimized to meet today's challenges.

Reacting to the need to transform its collective capabilities and harmonize diverse national potentials, the alliance created the NATO Response Force (NRF). The aim was to field a conventional combined-arms force capable of employing precision munitions, networked systems, and advanced surveillance systems against a similarly arrayed adversary. In addition to a highly ready force capable of instantaneous action, the NRF was to become the conceptual framework for NATO's military transformation—in essence the paradigm shift necessary to maintain relevance.[25] Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan increasingly support the notion that focusing transformational efforts on purely technological perfection of a high-end conventional force is an unnecessary luxury that drains resources from more pressing missions. First-tier military allies—like the United States and Great Britain—already dominate this type of warfare and possess overwhelming capabilities.

NATO binds members to a common cause against a mutual threat; however, as the first Gulf War demonstrated, all allies may not perceive a threat as sufficient to trigger a collective response. In this case, coalitions of members may emerge to address a threat that, while proximate, is technically outside the boundaries of the treaty but salient enough to justify a mutual response for either the sake of efficiency or political legitimacy. NATO's involvement in the Balkans falls into this category, as exemplified in Operation Provide Promise in 1992 where US leadership provided the impetus for the longest humanitarian airlift in history to various Bosnian cities. While the alliance's collective response in the former Yugoslavia began with the gradual escalation of air and maritime operations—including Sharp Guard, Maritime Guard, Deny Flight, Deliberate Force, and Dead Eye—it eventually culminated in Operation Joint Endeavor following the 1995 Bosnian Peace Agreement. This accord capped NATO's response with a protracted ground intervention by the Implementation Force (IFOR) and subsequently by the Stabilization Force (SFOR).[26]

With past action as a guide, future NATO ambitions will incubate within a coalition structure until a universal consensus for collective action is forged. If a rogue or nonstate actor presents an immediate threat to a vital interest, likely those nations with the capability to respond will act in the breach while the consensual process critical to allied unity of effort laboriously grinds toward a collective response. Similar to the Afghanistan experience, promptly mitigating the threat provides the necessary impetus for alliance involvement and the time necessary to garner united

action. Future contingencies will involve, therefore, a network of NATO and non-NATO members. This is borne out in former NATO secretary-general Lord Robertson's statement that the alliance is "the world's largest permanent coalition."[27]

Modeling this new reality is the Afghan experience. Initial entry into Afghanistan occurred using a high-end military force engaged in conventional combat operations. Once heavy combat subsided, US leadership and UN Security Council resolutions cleared the way for NATO forces to conduct security and stability operations. Today over 40 NATO and non-NATO nations participate—to one degree or another—in this mission. The conduct of actual military operations by the NRF, moreover, appears increasingly unlikely, as the alliance's de facto strategy relies upon an ad hoc coalition network under UN mandates and US leadership. NATO's response to the African Union's request for assistance in mounting military interventions in Darfur and Somalia are the exceptions that prove the rule. Absent American leadership, NATO's support to the African Union is anemic. The group of experts, in contrast, advocates expanding the authority and decision-making power of the secretary-general. While maintaining the fundamental principle of consensus rule, the group also recommends preserving it for only the most important decisions—to include those involving finances, membership, and new missions. While there is broad agreement that decision making within NATO is an arduous process, it is not clear that shortcuts involving the surrender of sovereignty will curtail national attempts to veto, compel participation, or contribute to the legitimacy prized by the group of experts.

Where the Alliance Goes from Here

The next strategic concept will outline the alliance's purpose and the features of the new security environment.[28] It will define NATO's tasks and outline the elements of a broad approach to their achievement. While its outline remains opaque, the group of experts suggests several contours. They advocate the continual evolution from defense to security, thereby maintaining continuity with past strategic concepts by, for example, reaffirming previous levels of NATO political and military ambition. The group urges deeper engagement with a wider array of organizations—from the European Union and the United Nations to the Organization of American States. Arguably, there is benefit to building on previous success;

however, while the group notes chronic shortcomings in the partnership programs, it gives short shrift to correcting past deficiencies. It provides a service, regardless, in not shying away from naming potential adversaries (Iran and North Korea, in particular) and specific recommendations to counter them.

Clearly NATO intends to continue evolving its comprehensive approach.[29] This is its version of the "whole of government" or "interagency" whereby the synergistic application of all instruments of power—diplomatic, information, military, and economic—is the basis of security. Along these lines, one can expect a call to deepen and broaden cooperation with other international and quasigovernmental organizations. These groups bring resources NATO lacks; for example, the EU's civilian capabilities. Primacy of consultation and international legitimacy will remain the basis for collective action. Regardless of the priorities set forth, the strategic concept must deal with hybrid threats now eclipsing conventional hazards, providing the military guidance necessary to align national ambitions with available resources.

Differing allied sensitivities result in divergent views on the means necessary for today's threat environment—while the United States tends to prefer hard power, the Europeans generally favor soft.[30] These preferences have resulted in a contentious debate over what constitutes a balanced-security workload and the corresponding level of equitable contributions. This issue has the potential to divide the alliance and embitter security cooperation. Where Americans see underinvestment, the Europeans counter that defense spending is not an accurate measure of a nation's commitment to security.[31] Europeans contend that by focusing purely on hard-power metrics, Washington overlooks nonmilitary investments in, for example, deployable law enforcement capabilities found in the European Gendarmerie Force (EGF).[32]

Divergent views on security and defense also punctuate the transatlantic divide, creating differing perspectives on how best to meet emerging security threats. Contrast, for example, America's dramatic increase in defense spending in the wake of 9/11 (notwithstanding the creation of the Department of Homeland Security) with the Spanish boost in internal security spending (while holding the line on defense expenditures) in the aftermath of the 2004 Madrid bombing.[33] In response to their respective attacks, Spain demurred invoking Article 5 while the United States accepted the first-ever such declaration. The internal European focus on

security juxtapositioned against the external US orientation on defense calls into question the relevancy of an alliance based on a military response. This dichotomy also threatens to reinforce the European tendency to favor social spending at the expense of defense outlays.

The United States has been singularly unsuccessful, moreover, in achieving its strategic objectives using high-tech military capabilities in the manpower-intensive conflicts it now confronts—and it is unlikely a collective NATO force organized along the same lines can fare any better.[34] A case in point is the civil war in Iraq and the continued insurgency in Afghanistan. In both conflicts, technology has proven indecisive and even counterproductive—initially lulling America into a false sense of success while ceding the initiative to the enemy. Any investment to transform NATO military capabilities along conventional lines merely to have our current or future adversaries asymmetrically exploit the vulnerabilities we are inadvertently creating is not in anyone's interest—except maybe our enemy. Instead, greater emphasis on security and stability capabilities required for the complex, low-intensity crisis response operations NATO is more likely to encounter is the key to improving collective security.

The form in which collective defense and security are manifest in the new strategic concept has important implications. While the former is traditionally the military's domain and the latter a civilian policing function, their practitioners must work cooperatively to address threats which blur confessional classification. Collective defense against an armed attack is the core task of the alliance—as codified in Article 5. It represents a conventional posture rooted in the primacy of military power and the assumption that the state is the primary actor. In this context, peer militaries represent the national security benchmark. Although it is unlikely the allies will alter Article 5, it is increasingly likely NATO will expand its definition to include a wider array of threats. It is, nevertheless, doubtful the alliance will face off against a regional peer—even if one existed. Collaboration, therefore, will increasingly eclipse confrontation in the alliance's strategic calculus.

While the group of experts advocates maintaining a substrategic nuclear option, the alliance is well served by exiting this business altogether. There is nothing "substrategic" about nuclear weapons. They are strategic in the first order, and the decision on their employment is the sole rightful province of the national leaders that possess them. The implications of their use cut to the core of national survival, and it is a decision over which no

nation tolerates anything less than complete authority. It is delusional to believe the alliance will ever achieve the consensus necessary to employ nuclear weapons when such discord exists over their mere deployment. Instead of insisting on the inclusion of a wedge issue that will further erode unity, the allies are better served by focusing their limited attention and scarce political capital on countering proliferation and building a missile shield.

The unification and integration of civilian and military capabilities is paramount regardless of whether NATO functions within the context of combat, security, stabilization, reconstruction, peacekeeping, peace-building, or counterinsurgency. More weapons do not necessarily equate to more security, and diplomacy is impotent without a military threat. The challenge, as seen in Afghanistan, is how best to achieve equilibrium. This does not imply the existence of a formal division of labor between Europe and the United States—whereby the former delivers soft civilian capabilities essential to build stability and security while the latter focuses on the hard military power necessary to destroy an adversary. Both the *European Security Strategy* (*ESS*) and the US *National Security Strategy* (*NSS*) call for a blended civil-military response that includes a mix of combat and noncombat capabilities. This balanced approach provides a broad political and practical base for addressing threats, but it requires improved integration of niche civil-military capabilities—and agreements to add any missing abilities to the alliance's portfolio.

In an effort to gain asymmetrical advantage, our adversaries will increasingly blend multiple combinations of capabilities into a type of hybrid warfare that challenges our assumptions about the character of war.[35] This requires the alliance to approach the convergence of threats in new ways and to accept new tasks. The tighter integration of military, political, economic, and informational power is now critical. This realization is behind the alliance's stillborn efforts to develop the doctrine of comprehensive approach (CA), which posits that by acting along multiple axes in which government civilians, private contractors, and the military combine efforts to promote civil reconstruction, encourage good governance, and support economic development, the alliance can spread security and stability. In Afghanistan, this translates into quashing the opium trade and doubling the number of police and soldiers while pushing Pakistan to exercise its sovereignty in tribal areas. Although nebulously defined, CA at least points to the need to synergize military and civilian efforts.[36]

The political ends toward which it seeks to focus national efforts should remain the central focus of the strategic concept, and since NATO's inception, these remain the expansion of free markets and the growth of democracies. This suggests an expeditionary force that will

- contain and control threats to international security and stability through limiting crisis expansion and facilitating a return to normality;

- preserve the Western political identity and institutions by maintaining open sea, air, and cyber lines of communication; and

- ensure continued economic prosperity through fair and reasonable access to natural resources and global markets.

This represents a broader foundation than articulated by the group of experts; however, like the North Atlantic Treaty itself, these aspirations flexibly bind members to "such action" as each signatory "deems necessary."[37] Any collective response, therefore, remains contingent on the nature of the threat and each member's willingness to act. This leaves the alliance a wide berth. At one end of the spectrum is global crisis management at the request of the UN—regardless of the degree to which member states are affected. At the other is only acting when a member's sovereignty is imperiled. The former lacks sustainability while the latter lacks relevancy. Popular resolve and commitment to the collective maintenance of international peace and stability by Western democracies can be uncertain and limited, especially when entanglements are not central to national interests or diverge from liberal values. In these cases, tolerance for the loss of talent and treasure is low. Consequently, the legitimacy conferred by the establishment of the rule of law, the promotion of economic growth, and the institution of democratic values must underpin the alliance's next strategic concept.

While US security is reliant on its capacity to act globally, NATO is but one actor in a globalized world and not a global actor. Some have urged the expansion of NATO into a global alliance, but this will quickly exhaust the Europeans and, in so doing, jeopardize transatlantic security.[38] Many of the most salient threats to the globalized world are on Europe's doorstep—specifically the arc that runs from Africa through Southwest and then Central Asia—which should circumscribe NATO's geographic ambitions.[39] If Europe succumbs, America's odds grow longer. NATO provides a European buffer, allowing the United States strategic defense in depth. While America will remain the ultimate security guarantor for

some time, Europe will continue to provide it a continental cushion. The ability to deter instability at a distance, therefore, is at the core of our investment in collective security.

Washington's leadership and commitment to the Euro-Atlantic pact remains critical to defending the American homeland, gaining market access, supporting kindred liberal democracies, and eliminating weapons of mass destruction. While the United States remains the security provider of last resort, NATO is up to addressing contemporary security concerns— but only under American leadership respectful of the limits of European power. The alliance must regain its central role as a forum for transatlantic security. To achieve this, both the United States and its European partners must commit to a NATO-first policy under which the United States defers from unilateral action and achieves a civil-military balance while respecting a lower level of European ambition. Europe, in turn, must reciprocate with fewer caveats and more capabilities. NATO must return to the principle—laid out in DC 6/1—that national means provide the basis for contributory equity. The European Union, furthermore, must complement NATO while refraining from competing with the alliance.

Global security is dependent on the emergence of peaceful, stable, prosperous, and self-confident democratic societies able to protect civil rights, combat terrorism, and contain illegal immigration. NATO's next strategy, therefore, must focus on integrating newly emancipated nations into a liberal geopolitical order. Direct Western involvement in countering militant fanaticism endemic in Southwest Asia and reviving failed or failing African states is often portrayed as neocolonialism in disguise. This requires NATO, therefore, to shift its focus from providing security directly to building national capacities. This would entail, for example, capacity building in Pakistan and Afghanistan, while working with India and Iran to address their legitimate security concerns. Closer to Western Europe, the alliance must manage Russia's imperialist fade by simultaneously drawing the line against lingering nostalgic ambitions and encouraging more constructive international relationships.

NATO success is dependent on the spread of ideals. The alliance, for example, faces an ideological battle in which al-Qaeda has devolved into an idea that is self-generating extremist affiliates.[40] To counter this threat, the integration and synchronization of information operations, public affairs, and public diplomacy in increasingly complex and multifaceted environments requires a coherent approach, the absence of which is undermining the alliance's effec-

tiveness. The institutionalization of strategic communications within NATO requires a shared understanding that results in the creation of lucid policy and doctrine. NATO's next strategic concept must prioritize the development of organizational structures, processes, and human-centric solutions that effectively integrate strategic communications at the tactical and operational levels—where they are missing today.

The alliance has proven a resilient and relevant organization, weathering past crises by adapting itself to changing environments. When its relevance was imperiled by paralysis in dealing with the growing Balkans crisis, NATO fell back on US leadership and UN mandates for the legitimacy and moral turpitude necessary to deal with threats in Europe's backyard. In the process, it undertook its first out-of-area combat deployment to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although the mid-1990s Balkans intervention was only a qualified success, the confidence gained by these groundbreaking operations set the stage for NATO's first combat operation outside of Europe. Less than 10 years later, troops deployed to Afghanistan under the NATO flag, where they continue to conduct stability and security operations in support of the Afghan government.[41] Today the alliance faces an unfinished war in Afghanistan, tensions with former Cold War foe Russia, doubts over the pace of future NATO expansion, and a dwindling appetite for military-centric solutions.

Properly shaped, the alliance permits the United States to distribute security responsibilities among a broad base of nations that share its commitment to liberal democratic values and global prosperity. Properly managed, the alliance is an important tool for guiding the rise of a multipolar world. NATO's next strategic concept must balance the asymmetric threats of the twenty-first century—terrorist networks, criminal enterprises, and climate change—with eighteenth-century conventional challenges posed by hegemonic nation-states. A successful strategic concept, therefore, will foster readiness, sustainability, and interoperability while offering a range of flexible options that leverage national strengths and direct their contribution to global security. Just as the NRF reaches full operational capability, the alliance must now adopt a more innovative and integrated approach to preparing its future response if it is to remain relevant. It must do this in an increasingly resource-constrained environment and in the face of the growing hybridization of threats. To accomplish this requires overcoming bureaucratic inertia, organizational culture, and national

caveats. While we may not be able to anticipate tomorrow's threats, it is clear is that NATO cannot meet them without a coherent strategy. **SSQ**

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